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NEWS

Winchester legislators help pass comprehensive climate action law

December 3, 2024 . 5:19 PM — 4 min read

Winchester legislators helped pass sweeping comprehensive legislation to meet the climate crisis. FILE PHOTO

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis:

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State Sens. Jason Lewis and Pat Jehlen and state Reps. Michael Day and Michelle Ciccolo joined their colleagues in the Massachusetts Legislature to pass sweeping climate legislation to meet the climate crisis head-on and accelerate progress towards the state's goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

An Act Promoting a Clean Energy Grid, Advancing Equity, and Protecting Ratepayers simplifies clean energy infrastructure permitting, protects residents from high energy costs, expands the electric vehicle (EV) charging network, and incentivizes innovative technologies such as battery storage, fusion energy, advanced metering and meter socket adapters.

"Massachusetts is a national and global leader in combating climate change and shifting to clean, renewable energy like solar and offshore wind," said Lewis. "This robust legislation builds upon our previous legislative efforts in order to accelerate the building of clean energy infrastructure, advance innovation in climate technology, create quality green jobs, and help protect ratepayers from high energy costs."

"A top concern in our communities is prioritizing infrastructure changes to combat climate change and move towards renewable energies," said Jehlen. "This bill includes many important tools for communities, including local charging infrastructure, municipal fleet electrification, and, importantly, protecting residents from sharp increases in energy costs. I am glad to see this comprehensive bill pass so we can stay on track to deliver on our net zero emissions goal while also prioritizing creating green jobs and protections for ratepayers."

"Massachusetts has always been a leader in climate policies," said Day. "I was proud to support this legislation that moves us closer to our clean energy goals by reducing our carbon footprint and ensuring a sustainable future for our children."

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“I was thrilled that so many of my top climate priorities remained in the final version of the Climate Bill,” said Ciccolo. “The final legislation enables our Commonwealth to make considerable progress towards our climate goals and transition away from fossil fuels. The bill also protects rate payers, requires the siting commission to consider public access to trails in new facilities, alters the Massport charter to include climate considerations, prevents historic districts and condo association from rejecting vehicle charging ports solely on aesthetic grounds, and creates commissions to study the role of embodied carbon in our buildings and the potential for extended producer responsibility to address our waste crisis. I have the greatest appreciation for my colleagues on the conference committee and their hard work and dedication to get this bill over the finish line and onto the governor’s desk. I look forward to further opportunities to advance our climate priorities in the session to come.”

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Key provisions of this climate legislation include:

• Expediting the siting and permitting of clean energy infrastructure projects by requiring that large projects that need state, regional, and local permits be consolidated into a single permit that requires action within 15 months, and that small projects with multiple local permits be consolidated into a single permit with action within 12 months.

• Enhancing community review of clean energy project permitting by establishing the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity, the Office of Public Participation at the Energy Facilities Siting Board, and the Division of Siting and Permitting at the Department of Energy Resources, a robust, thorough and community-centered review of all projects

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• Protecting residents from high energy costs by directing utility providers to offer lower rates to low- and middle-income consumers and incentivizing utility companies to expand the use of climate- and cost-friendly infrastructure.

• Extending the "Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles" (MOR-EV) program through 2027, which gives residents $3,500-$6,000 for the purchase of new or used electric vehicles.

• Expanding the availability of EV charging stations by centralizing the statewide coordination of charger installation via the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Coordinating Council, directing the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to make it easier to install pole-mounted chargers that often are used in parking spots and on streets, and removing EV charger installation restrictions for residents who own parcels within condominiums, homeowner associations, and historic districts.

• Making it easier for cities and towns to procure electric school buses and EV charging equipment for their municipalities.

• Supporting offshore wind development by expanding existing tax credits for offshore wind facility employers, increasing the maximum of 20 year terms for offshore wind contracts up to 30 years, and directing the Department of Energy Resources to review the effectiveness of existing contracts and issue guidance on long-term power purchase agreements between offshore wind developers and municipalities, including approved aggregation plans.

• Continuing the deployment of solar energy through expanding affordability and access for low-income customers to utilize the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program, updating historic district laws, providing policy recommendations through a solar

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working group, and requiring DPU to explore expanding access to net crediting.

• Strengthening efficient grid management and improved resiliency with advanced metering infrastructure, including smart meters, communications networks and data management systems to help use devices more efficiently and provide real-time data to the grid.

• Decarbonizing more buildings by authorizing condo association boards to install energy efficiency devices and EV chargers in common areas and increasing the efficiency of heat pumps by allowing installers to use the most up-to-date refrigerants.

• Supporting carbon removal innovation by expanding the mission of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) to include carbon removal, embodied carbon reduction, and nuclear power. MassCEC would also be directed to promote carbon removal and embodied carbon activities, and study opportunities for future carbon removal.

• Supporting fusion energy and battery storage by becoming the first state in the nation to add fusion energy to the list of Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard Class I renewable energy generating sources, positioning the Commonwealth to be in a strategically beneficial position as fusion energy becomes commercially viable.

• Leading by example by directing state government to analyze its own climate impacts and how state infrastructure, including state buildings and Massport, can be more climate friendly.

• Updating Massport's mandate to prioritize reducing emissions and environmental justice principles while pursuing commerce and growth.

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After final passage in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, Gov. Maura Healey signed the bill into law on Nov. 22, 2024.

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March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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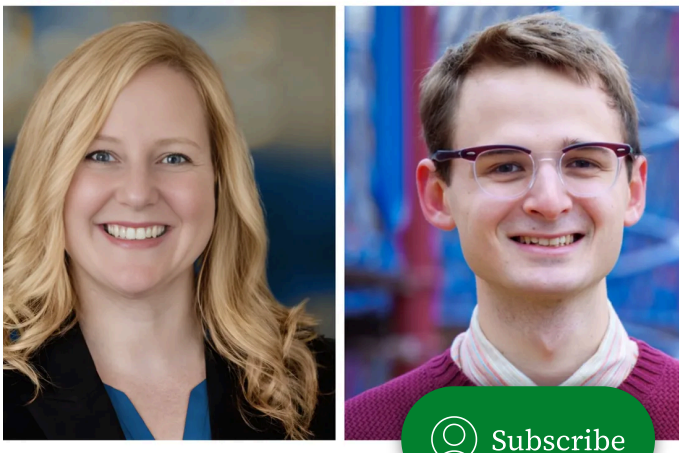

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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